

Fullerton Heritage

Summer

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A Wealthy Heiress on Trial for Murder

Fullerton's Connection to the Crime of the Century

by Debora Richey



The Mary E., a Chris Craft Cruiser

A few minutes before midnight on March 15, 1947, 17-year-old USC co-ed Beulah Louise Overell and her fiancée, 21-year-old George "Bud" Gollum, stood on shore while the Mary E., a 47-foot yacht moored in Newport Harbor, exploded. Onboard were Beulah's parents, wealthy financier Walter E. Overell, 62, and his wife, Beulah, 57. Walter and Beulah Overell were wealthy socialites from the tiny subdivision of Flintridge. Walter Overell had made his original fortune in the furniture business in the 1930s and 1940s, then turned to real estate investment. Flintridge - now known as La Canada Flintridge was named after developer and United States Senator Frank P. Flint, who was erroneously rumored to be having an affair with Beulah Overell. One of the streets in the city was named after her - Beulah Drive. The Overell's had one spoiled daughter, Beulah Louise, who went by Louise, their sole heir.

After the mangled Chris-Craft cruiser was towed to shallow water by the Coast Guard, it was discovered that more than 30 sticks of dynamite had been planted in the boat's engine room, wired to an alarm clock detonator, and attached to the yacht's battery. A second cache of dynamite, which failed to detonate, was found in another area. The coroner determined that Walter and Beulah Overell had been bludgeoned to death one hour before the explosion. It was quickly discovered that the Overells had bitterly opposed their



Beulah Overell & George Gollum, 1947

daughter's marriage to Gollum – an ex-sailor and "pre premed" student at Los Angeles City College - and had threatened to disinherit Louise if the marriage took place. The police found pieces of wire, pink adhesive tape, a receipt for the purchase of dynamite, and bloody clothes in Gollum's car. Louise's blood splattered clothes were found at her Flintridge home. Bud and Louise were also identified as the purchasers of the dynamite at the Chatsworth office of the Trojan Powder Company the day before the explosion. The police theorized that Mr. and Mrs. Overell had been beaten to death, then a bomb detonated to cover up the murders. Four days after the explosion, the young lovebirds were arrested and charged with murder. Denied bail,

Fullerton Police Department Sign Restoration

A Community Effort

by Terry Galvin

The Works Progress Administration-funded Fullerton City Hall at 237 West Commonwealth Avenue was completed in 1942. Most city offices and services were then combined in one building for the first time. Public access to the Police Station portion was located at the end of the building on the Commonwealth side. Signing was installed to direct the public to the entrance. As the city grew, more space was needed, so a "new" City Hall was completed in 1963 on the west side of Highland. The Police Department then expanded into the entire old city hall and a new neon sign in the shape of an arrow was manufactured and installed in the current location for the new public access.

The Nu-Art Sign Company designed, produced, and installed the new Police sign. The company was established in Fullerton in 1946. At its peak, the company employed a dozen mechanics and artists who produced both neon and painted





signs that ranged from postage stamp size to thousand-dollar extravaganzas. In the mid-1950s, the company – whose slogan was "Everything in Signs" – was producing 95% of the signs made in northern Orange County. The Fullerton Police sign is an outstanding example of the excellent craftsmanship and technical skills employed by Fullerton workers.

The sign is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Fullerton City Hall federal designation in 2003. It is also a Fullerton Local Landmark as part of the designation of the old Fullerton City Hall as Local Landmark Number 9.

The Police sign is the third oldest neon sign in Fullerton, after the Dewella Apartments (234-236 East Wilshire Avenue) art deco sign installed in 1929, which is also listed on the National Register.

The red, white, and blue YMCA Sign (1962), located at 2000 Youth Way, and dramatically positioned overlooking North Harbor Boulevard, is the second oldest neon sign, is a Local Landmark, and is also a product of the Nu-Art Sign Company.

The Police sign had been inoperable for about 8 years with attempts to repair broken neon tubes not able to keep pace with the ongoing vandalism. In 2022, Fullerton Heritage determined the sign should be given serious consideration for restoration. The Police Department supported the idea so the Board initiated a Request for Proposals (RFP) from sign companies that were experienced in neon repair. This is becoming a lost art and only two local companies responded to the RFP. Both indicated that while they do repair work on neon signs, the only manufacturers of the neon tubing are located in Los Angeles.

Orange County Signs and Lighting in Fullerton was selected as the low bidder at \$6,000, with the bid that best reflected the restoration approach that we were seeking.

The project included obtaining the required City permits, removing the old pole, restoring the sign cabinet as needed, fabricating and installing new blue and red neon gas tubes in the original locations, installing a new sign pole 2 feet taller and 5 feet east of the former location (to deter vandalism), removing ornamentation from the old pole and reinstalling it on the new pole, and installing a sensor that regulates the sign to light at dusk and turn off at dawn.

Separate projects required constructing a foundation for the new pole and installing a new camera to record any activity around the sign. The project was successful due to 47 generous cash contributions, including \$3,000 from the Fullerton Main Rotary Club, plus Fullerton Heritage members, and 40 online donors, for a total of \$6,599. In-kind donations included the camera provided by the Police Department and the pole foundation construction by Bushala Brothers, Inc.



A Weathly Heiress on Trial for Murder

- continued from page 1 -



at the start of their murder trial in 1947.

Courtesy of the Fullerton Public Library.

they remained in jail awaiting trial.

The murders occurred in the incorporated city of Newport Beach, but the then small town's investigators had little experience in explosives, so the probe fell to the Orange County Sheriff's Department. The Sheriff's Office had no genuine crime lab, so evidence had to be sent to outside firms for analysis. The evidence handling and examination would be uniformly careless and shoddy

despite the substantial cost of \$75,000. Assistant U. S. Attorney Eugene D. Williams, who had political aspirations, was selected as the prosecutor. Louise Overell's relatives hired Otto Jacobs, a veteran attorney who had handled 80 major crime cases, including eight murder trials (all of which he had won). Gollum was represented by S. B. Kaufman, a former Orange County District Attorney.

The sensational 19-week murder trial that followed – at the time, the longest criminal trial in United States' history – quickly became the most famous murder case to be tried at the old Santa Ana Courthouse (1901). Thousands of spectators crammed the hallways, spread out across the courthouse grounds and down into the street, waiting for a glimpse of the notorious couple. Nothing like it had ever been seen before in Orange County. Judge Kenneth Morrison allowed radio microphones in the courtroom, and the trial was broadcasted throughout the United States and as far abroad as Australia. Millions of people worldwide listened to all four months of the trial testimony.

The murder trial had everything going for it: a heinous crime, star-crossed lovers, and the sordid and scandalous lives of the rich. It was estimated that the trial gained more newspaper space than any other trial with the exception of the famous Lindbergh



Beulah Louise and George "Bud" Gollum being escorted from the nearby jail to the their trial in the old Santa Ana Courthouse. Photo: Courtesy of the Fullerton Public Library. baby kidnapping. The story made daily headlines in newspapers across the country, with every detail reported and dissected, including Louise's plumpness, bushy eyebrows, and inappropriate courtroom attire. Bud was photographed being fitted with a pair of wire-rimmed glasses designed to make him appear more studious. The Los Angeles Examiner obtained private love letters between the couple, including a plan for a jailbreak complete with a map, and published one clandestine letter a day. The letters were equally salacious and ludicrous, with Louise penning: "O my darling, O my pops, popsie, darling, my beautiful, handsome, intelligent pops, I adore you always, eternally". The sordid letters and sections from Beulah's personal diary were read aloud in court but did little to counteract the growing sympathy for the young lovers.

Defense attorney Otto Jacobs methodically chipped away at the prosecution's shoddy evidence, which was often delayed in processing, noting in his closing argument that the case was built on "possibilities, probabilities and a lot of myths". One dramatic moment came when one of the prosecution's expert witnesses testified that he had found an exceptionally rare screw used in the bombing in Gollum's car. Jacobs went to a nearby hardware store and bought a barrel of the screws, and in cross-examining the expert, pulled out a handful from his coat pocket and threw them all over the courtroom. Jacobs insisted that there was no direct proof and advanced the theory that

Walter Overell, despondent over financial losses, had committed a murdersuicide. After listening to 107 witnesses and over one million words of testimony, the six men and six women of the sequestered jury deliberated for two days. Cheers broke out in the packed, sweltering courtroom when a Not Guilty verdict was announced on October 5, 1947. Female jury members hugged and kissed Bud Gollum.

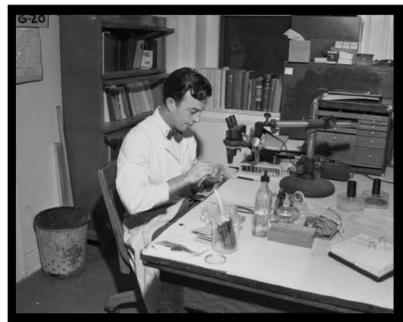


Orange County Sheriff
James Musick, right, and
another man inspect a
model of an alarm-clock
bomb supposedly used
to blow up the Overell
family yacht.

A Weathly Heiress on Trial for Murder

Trial Outcomes

The jury's decision came as a shock to the prosecution and the public. Although not the last miscarriage of justice in Orange County, the trial did lead to positive changes. Legislation was quickly adopted regulating the sale and purchase of dynamite. James A. Musick, who in 1947 was Orange County's new sheriff – and would go on to become the longest-tenured sheriff in department history – was shocked and mortified by the trial's outcome. He vowed to never lose another case because of poor forensic lab work. In 1948, Musick requested and received funding to establish the Orange County Sheriff's Crime Lab. He hired Walter Jack Cadman (1918-2003) to start Orange County's first crime lab in a converted women's restroom in the county jail on Sycamore Street in Santa Ana. Raised in Fullerton, Jack Cadman was the son of Walter Joseph Cadman, a developer who had subdivided five tracts in the Golden Hill area. He had graduated from both Fullerton Union High School and Fullerton College before receiving a forensic science degree from the University of California, Berkeley. Working for the Oakland Police Department at the time of the job offer, Cadman was delighted to return to Fullerton, and he and his wife Evelyn would raise their eight children in the city (1209 Jacaranda Place). Evelyn Cadman (1923-2004) would later serve as a local history librarian with the Fullerton Public Library and help to compile *Images of Yesterday: Fullerton Photo Album* (1986).



Left: Jack Cadman examining evidence in the Orange County Crime Lab, May 1951. Photo credit: The Old Courthouse Museum



Right: Jack Cadman's Fullerton College Yearbook photograph.

Jack Cadman quickly became a familiar figure at crime scenes, working alone as Orange County's first and only forensic scientist. A superb scientist, he was a poised and unflappable witness at hundreds of criminal trials, letting the science speak for itself. Sporting his trademark bow tie and smoking a pipe, Cadman established methods for testing samples from suspected drunk drivers, for analyzing drugs and narcotics, and for typing blood and matching it and other bodily fluids to crime victims and suspects, long before DNA analysis existed. His meticulous work won the Orange County Crime Laboratory full accreditation even before the F.B.I. lab received its own accreditation. In 1958, after eight months of diligent effort and work with Theron Johns of Beckman Instruments, Inc. of Fullerton, Cadman developed a technique for measuring ethyl alcohol in the blood using Beckman's gas chromatograph. The method was revealed to the world that year at the 9th annual conference on analytical chemistry, leading to the development of the Breathalyzer. Cadman worked alone until 1960, when a staff of four scientists was added, and by 1989, the Orange County Crime Laboratory had a staff of 100 working in a new 120,000 square-foot facility. By the time Cadman, one of the first to hire women in a crime laboratory, retired in 1977, the Orange County Crime Laboratory was recognized as a leader in the forensic science community.

Beulah Louise Overall and Bud Gollum After the Acquittal

During the trial, Louise had tried to arrange her marriage in jail, but after the couple's letters became public, her attitude toward Gollum cooled. By the end of the trial, the two were no longer on speaking terms and left the courthouse in different cars. After their acquittals, things did not go well for either of them as their fame faded. Raised in wealth and privilege, Louise found herself ostracized from upper crust society and shunned by her family. As a minor, Louise had started receiving an \$800 stipend each month in 1947, from what she expected would be a vast

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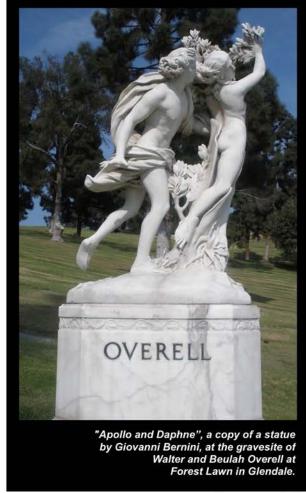
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price was cut to 25 cents, then 15 cents as interest waned. The boat was auctioned off in February 1949 for \$1,900, restored, and went through a number of name changes.

Mr. and Mrs. Overell's estate – estimated at \$310,000 at probate (about two million today) - would get caught up in the court system and be eaten up by state, federal, and inheritance taxes, along with legal and guardian fees, outstanding liabilities, and business obligations owed by Walter Overall. Louise had to wait until her birthday in 1950 to receive her inheritance, which left her comfortable, but not fabulously wealthy. She spent her time drinking and bar hopping. She pled guilty in March 1948 to a hit and run traffic accident. On July 1, 1949, at the age of 20, she married Los Angeles policeman Robert Cannon, 28 – his third marriage - and the two purchased the Kenmore Bar on West Third Street in Los Angeles. The marriage would be over one year later. The couple divorced in Las Vegas on November 14, 1952, with Beulah receiving custody of their 2-year old son; Cannon kept the bar. Beulah moved permanently to Las Vegas to distance herself from local notoriety and her disapproving family. There she married a bartender; drifted into alcoholism; and was arrested for drunk driving in 1955. She died in 1965, at 36. Her naked and bruised body was found in bed in her Las Vegas home with two empty vodka bottles near her head and a loaded, cocked, but unfired, .22-caliber rifle at her feet. The cause of her death was acute alcohol poisoning. Her second husband spent most of Louise's remaining inheritance, and her son was left with a mere \$28,000.

After the trial, Gollum stopped using "Bud" but was still recognized. He rented a cheap apartment and used his G.I. benefits to attend the University of California, Los Angeles. In 1949, he was hired as a



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traveling carnival roustabout where he met and married a young daredevil motorcycle rider. When she learned about his past from the carnival owner, she asked for an annulment, claiming that Gollum had pressured her into the marriage, which she insisted was never consummated. A year later, he was arrested by a South Carolina State Trooper for driving a stolen car across state lines and was sentenced to a year in federal prison.

After his release from prison, Gollum went back to school, graduated, and took a position with a company that manufactured nuclear parts. He married again in 1952, and had two children, but the marriage ended in divorce. He moved up to isolated Mountain Ranch in Calaveras County, went into real estate speculation, and dropped out of sight. He was arrested in 1984 for growing marijuana, but spent no time in prison. He then moved to Alaska with the idea of cultivating marijuana. On January 5, 2006, was arrest by Alaska State Troopers in Palmer. He was charged with four counts of violating Alaska laws pertaining to the growing and distribution of marijuana. He pled guilty to a single charge and spent time in prison. He died alone on February 26, 2009, in Wasilla, Alaska, at the age of 82.



New National Register Listing: **Fullerton College**



Fullerton Heritage is proud to announce the latest addition to Fullerton's National Register Properties. Fullerton College Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on March 10, 2023. The application was prepared and submitted by Fullerton Heritage, following coordination with the North Orange County Community College District and Fullerton College.

The newly designated historic district on the Fullerton College campus was planned, laid out, and constructed from 1935 to 1942. It comprises 7.84 acres and includes seven contributing buildings, four of which were the first buildings constructed for the college: the Commerce/Business Education Building (1936); the Administration and Social Science Building (1938); the Technical Trades Building (1938); and a U-shaped building constructed in three phases that encompasses the Locker Room (1939), Student Union (1940), and The Hive (1941), a student eatery and hang-out. In addition to these four original buildings, two contributing sites are the Quad (1936) and Patio (1941). Three additional buildings not mentioned above are: the Library & Learning Resource Center Building (2006); the College Center Building (2008); and the South Science Building (2011). These buildings are more recently built and fashioned in a Spanish Colonial Revival style and are not included in the National Register listing. Please visit the Fullerton Heritage website for more information on this significant listing. www.fullertonheritage.org



Your **Membership Matters**

The last few years have been challenging at times and because of this. **Fullerton Heritage's** membership has declined. We need your support! If your newsletter has a Membership Expired sticker on it, PLEASE take the time to renew today. A strong membership helps Fullerton Heritage work to preserve our past, for the future generations to come.

Are you on Social Media?

If so Follow our pages. Every week we post new stories and photos about Fullerton's past.



instagram.com/ fullertonheritage



facebook.com/ **FullertonHeritageOC** It's hard to believe it's August already and 2023 is half over. We started the year with the 100-year anniversary of the California Hotel, now Villa Del Sol, which turned 100 on January 15, 2023. Now we're getting ready for another 100-year anniversary – the Chapman Building is turning 100 in November. Watch for a special edition Newsletter to celebrate this monumental occasion.

The Fullerton Heritage Annual Meeting was held on June 25, 2023, at Rutabegorz Restaurant in downtown Fullerton. Paul Berkman and Dane Anderson were kind enough to open for us again on a Sunday. We had a nice turnout and celebrated Fullerton Heritage's accomplishments over the last year.

We announced during the Annual Meeting that Maureen Burton, a long-time Fullerton Heritage Board Member, has retired as of July 1, 2023. Maureen was an excellent Board Member and will continue some of her Board duties as an "active member". We're happy that she'll still be around supporting our efforts. Thank you for everything Maureen!

Fullerton Heritage is proud once again to be a recipient of the 2023 Fullerton Rotary Community Investment Award. This \$500 award will go toward placing a plaque at the Fullerton Police Station commemorating the recently restored neon "Police" sign. Fullerton Heritage thanks the Fullerton Rotary for this prestigious award plus their very generous donation of \$3,000 to the FPD Neon sign restoration.

Our official photographer, Emerson Little (from the *Fullerton Observer*), has his summer shot list and is out photographing Fullerton from our nightlife to the new Fullerton Union High School gymnasium to our City Council Chambers. We donate all these photographs to the Local History Room at the Fullerton Public Library. Part of our mission is to "document" Fullerton and we do this often through photography.

Speaking of the library, we have a meeting scheduled to review and finalize which original furniture and fixtures from the Hunt Library will be saved and how many of the items need restoration or added attention. This will be our third meeting on this subject, and we look forward to seeing the furniture and fixtures back in use.

The Fullerton Heritage research team is always finding out interesting stuff! Did you know that famed science fiction writer Philip K. Dick lived in Fullerton? Or that adventurer writer C. S. Forester, author of *The African Queen* and the *Horatio Hornblower* series, also lived and died in Fullerton? Fullerton is a great city!

Enjoy the rest of your summer and thank you for your ongoing support.
With warm regards,

Ernie

Halloween Decorating Contest 2023

Last year we had our inaugural home decorating contest during the December. This year we are switching it up and having a Halloween decorating contest. Only homes in Preservation Zones will be eligible. Judging will take place on 10/29/23.

The categories this year will be:

- Most Whimsical
- Scariest
- Best use of lights & sounds

Winners receive \$100 and one annual membership to Fullerton Heritage. So let's see those vintage homes decorated! Contact Fullerton Heritage at (714) 740-3051 or info@fullertonheritage.org if you are interested in learning more.

Renew Your Membership Today

Welcome New Members:

Adrian Witt / Julie Vandergrift / Lynn Yauger
Thank you!

Board of Directors 2023-2024

John Estrada / Terry Galvin / Ann Gread Jennifer Harris / Ernie Kelsey / Bob Linnell Debora Richey / Noelle Rossi Raymond Sly / Joan Wolff



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Information provided by Fullerton Heritage
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WHY YOUR MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

For over 30 years, Fullerton Heritage has worked to save and restore Fullerton's historic places. A privately funded nonprofit organization, we:

- Provide continued education and promotion of the conservation and restoration of the city's rich architectural and cultural resources
- Furnish assistance to businesses and homeowners who want to restore, remodel, or make additions to their historic properties
- Advocate for and monitor on-going restoration projects throughout the city
- Nominate local historic properties to the Local Landmarks registry and the National Register of Historic Places
- · Work closely with city staff to ensure that preservation programs are effectively implemented

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Initiated, drafted, and worked with city staff to establish Residential Preservation Zones, as well as accompanying guidelines; ten Zones have been designated so far
- Nominated and successfully listed 12 properties on the National Register of Historic Places, as well as adding over 100 structures, resources, and environments to the Local Landmarks registry
- Assisted in the establishment and implementation of the Mills Act
- · Plaqued hundreds of historic properties and districts throughout the city
- · Compiled an online vendor resource directory of businesses and craftsmen for restorationists
- Increased awareness of the city's history and historical resources; the publication of books, articles, and newsletters, walking tours, workshops, and presentations
- Advocated for the preservation of historic properties, including the Fox Fullerton Theatre, Beckman Instruments, Inc., and the Amerige Bros. Real Estate Office
- Liaisoned with other city and county historic preservation groups in Orange County
- Served on several advisory committees, including the Ad Hoc Hillcrest Park Committee and the Transportation Center Specific Plan
- Donated books, photographs, and historic materials to the Local History Room of the Fullerton Public Library
- Identified, documented, and photographed hundreds of historic properties in the city, continuously updating the first 1978 history survey

Fullerton Heritage is a nonprofit corporation and tax-exempt charity registered as an IRC Section 501 (c) (3)



OUR MISSION

Foster an appreciation of our City's cultural history and ensure the preservation of our historic architectural resources and environments.

MEMBERSHIP FORM		NAME:		
Yes, I want to support Fullerton Heritage in preserving Fullerton's historic cultural and architectural resources.		ADDRESS:		
Please check one:		CITY:		_ ZIP:
☐ \$10 Student ☐ \$15 Senior (65 & over)	\$100 Friend \$250 Corporate	TELEPHONE:		
\$20 Individual \$25 Non-profit	\$500 Patron \$1000 Benefactor	E-MAII.		
\$30 Family \$50 Small Business	S Contribution	DATE:		
☐ I would like to be active in Fullerton Heritage,		Renewal	■New member	☐ Gift Membership
and am interested in the following activities:		Send check along with this form to:		
☐ Advocacy/Issues	Restoration Resources & Referrals	Fullerton Heritage / PO Box 3356		
☐ Programs/Education	☐ Downtown walking tour docent	Fullerton, CA 92834-3356		
Contribute to the Newsletter	Other interest (please list):	Or join/renew online: https://www.fullertonheritage.org		